United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General warns against fragility of planet Earth and stresses connection between human survival and environmental protection, in opening address at United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro.

+ Security Council, in Presidential statement, expresses deep concern about delays by both Government of El Salvador and Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberacion Nacional in implementing New York Agreements.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, addressing the opening meeting of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro this morning, warned about the fragility of planet earth, saying "the time of the finite world has come" -- a world in which we are "under house arrest". Stressing the connection between human survival and environmental protection, he said, "one cannot protect a natural resource by denying its use to those who depend on it for survival".

The Secretary-General pointed out that global warming was caused by the gases which constituted "the very underpinnings of industrialized societies". He said "this means that the lifestyle of rich countries is ecologically unsound, and that their development cannot, at the present stage, be considered 'sustainable'". But it was "in the poor countries that the depletion of resources is most serious," he said, "given that those countries are obliged to overwork the natural resources on which their survival depends. They are compelled to sacrifice their future to eke out a precarious daily existence".

If the concept of development was not expanded further, he warned, the earth would find itself confronted with the paradox that it would be suffering both from overdevelopment and underdevelopment. The term "development" must mean both "sustainable development" and "planetary development". In this context, he pointed out that a portion of military spending must be redirected to planetary development projects.

(more)

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Stressing that action had to be taken in the face of uncertainty, the Secretary-General called for innovative ways of "promoting dialogue between science and politics in the context of the follow-up to this Conference".

Following the Secretary-General's address, Brazilian President Fernando Collor was elected President of the Conference by consensus. Among other speakers today were Maurice Strong, the Secretary-General of the Conference; King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden; the Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland, who is also Chairman of the World Commission on Environment and Development; and the President of Portugal, Mario Soares.

Tomorrow, the Secretary-General will attend a ceremony concerning the signature of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. He will then depart from Rio for his official visit to Montevideo, Uruguay.

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The President of the Security Council, Peter Noterdaeme (Belgium), in a presidential statement issued on behalf of the Council today, expressed deep concern about the many delays by both parties in implementing agreements concluded between the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN), and "the climate of mutual suspicion that still remains". If that situation were to continue, the statement said, it would "jeopardize the very foundation of the agreements".

The Council was responding to the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador, dated 26 May. It welcomed the fact that the cease-fire was holding and that there had not been a single iolation since it came into force on 1 February, but urged both parties to demonstrate good faith in fully implementing the agreements. They also called on the parties to abide by the agreed time limits, to exert every effort to bring about national reconciliation in El Salvador and to implement the process of demobilization and reform.

The members of the Council reaffirmed their full support for the efforts made by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Iqbal Riza, with the assistance of the "Friends of the Secretary-General" and the other Governments concerned. They expressed their concern about threats to the safety of the staff of ONUSAL, who were working under very difficult conditions, and they reminded the parties of their obligation to take all necessary measures to guarantee the safety of ONUSAL members.

Also on the agenda of Security Council consultations this morning were the report of the Secretary-General on the question of Western Sahara; his report regarding the presence of the Yugoslav People's Army and elements of the Croatian Army in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and a letter from the Palestine Liberation Organization.

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